Temporary Shutdown of Access Points on the Virginia Creeper Trail

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why is the Creeper Trail temporarily shutdown?
   • The Creeper Trail is an outdoor recreation destination for many people from outside our communities. Current COVID-19 case tracking shows that asymptomatic COVID-19 positive visitors are a leading source of new infections in communities and, though most nearby states are under stay-at-home orders, many were still visiting the trail. (For more information, see Governor Northam’s state-at-home order of March 30 or similar orders from your home state).
   • User density increases:
     o There were weekly increases of trail users since social distancing recommendations were made, which resulted in decreasing social distancing practices.
     o As the Easter holidays approached, there was a significant uptick of inquiries about the Creeper Trail from out-of-area visitors. Virginia is under a stay-at-home order as of March 30.
     o As a result of temporary shutdowns of many other outdoor recreation venues in the area, visitors were being funneled onto the Creeper Trail, further increasing current and projected use.
     o Based on long-term trends and historical data, trail usage greatly increases as warm weather approaches.
   • Modeling shows COVID-19 cases increasing in southwest Virginia between now and early to mid-May when the projected peak will be reached. Town and EMS officials are concerned that even the normal rate of accidents on the trail requiring EMS’s limited staff and equipment could over-burden the system, diverting needed resources away from responding to urgent health needs in our communities.
   • Within the Creeper Trail footprint, we have large elderly populations who are most at-risk for developing complications and dying from the coronavirus and we have a duty to protect them.

2. Who does the temporary shutdown impact?
   • The temporary shutdown of access points along the Creeper Trail applies to everyone.

3. Will the trail be monitored?
   • There will be periodic monitoring along the trail.

4. Are bathrooms and all other trail facilities open or closed?
   • All bathrooms, interpretive centers, Welcome and Visitor Centers, picnic shelters and other facilities are currently closed.

5. I just want to ride my bike and not walk in a group. Can I just go out and ride alone?
   • No... all access points on the Creeper Trail are temporarily shut down.
6. Can I fish along the river?

- Fishing spots may be accessed by crossing the trail where necessary but cannot be accessed through normal entry/access points that are currently shutdown.

7. Will trail maintenance continue?

- Regular maintenance has been temporarily halted on the US Forest Service section of the trail. Periodic maintenance will continue on the Abingdon to Damascus section as needed.

8. Since the Appalachian Trail and the Creeper Trail run together, why isn’t the Appalachian Trail closed?

- Trailhead facilities and access points to the Appalachian Trail, including parking lots dedicated to the AT, remain temporarily shutdown as well.

9. When will the trail be reopened?

- Over the coming weeks, we will be evaluating the status of the trail regularly. The decision to reopen will be based on recommendations and orders issued by the Commonwealth, the federal government, and the CDC as well as our local officials and agencies.

10. Who should I contact with questions about the temporary shutdown of access points along the trail?

- Call the Virginia Creeper Trail Conservancy at 804-334-5853. Please do NOT call 9-1-1!